

Appl. No. 09/580,819
Atty. Docket No. 7606R
Amdt. dated June 04, 2004
Reply to Office Action of 04/22/2004
Customer No. 27752

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) An integral structure comprising a base element and plurality of microneedles formed thereon, said microneedles suitable for penetrating the stratum corneum layer of skin, wherein said base element has a first side and a second side;

said plurality of microneedles comprising a plurality of projections disposed on said outer surface of said microneedles and which extend from the second side of said base element along longitudinal axes, in a longitudinal direction from a proximal end towards a distal end, and exhibiting at least one angle with respect to said base element; and

said plurality of projections being spaced apart from one another at a substantially predetermined separation distance, and said plurality of projections having a substantially uniform length, wherein:

said substantially predetermined separation distance is within a range of 50-1000 microns, and said substantially uniform length is within a range of 50-3000 microns,

wherein said microneedles have at least one elongate sharp edge that enhances penetration of said microneedles through the stratum corneum layer of skin, wherein said elongate sharp edge is oriented ~~substantially~~ in the longitudinal direction and extends in a direction from said proximal end of said microneedle towards said distal end of said microneedle.

2. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 1, wherein said plurality of projections comprises a plurality of hollow elements, and wherein said substantially predetermined separation distance is within a range of 50-300 microns, and said substantially uniform length is within a range of 50-200 microns.

3. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 2, wherein said plurality of hollow elements each comprise an outer diameter in the range of 20-100 microns.

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4. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 3, wherein said plurality of hollow elements each exhibit a substantially circular outer contour in a transverse plane that is substantially perpendicular to a longitudinal axis of said hollow element; and wherein said substantially predetermined separation distance is within a range of 100-200 microns, said substantially uniform length is within a range of 100-150 microns, and said plurality of hollow elements each comprise an outer diameter in the range of 20-50 microns.

5. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 3, wherein said plurality of hollow elements each exhibit an edged outer contour, in a transverse plane that is substantially perpendicular to a longitudinal axis of said hollow element, said outer contour having at least two sharp projections proximal to an end of the hollow element that is distal from said base element; and wherein said substantially predetermined separation distance is within a range of 100-200 microns, said substantially uniform length is within a range of 80-150 microns, and said plurality of hollow elements each comprise an outer diameter in the range of 20-50 microns.

6. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 4, wherein at least one of said longitudinal axes of said microneedles is in alignment with one of a plurality of first openings in the second side of said base element; and wherein said hollow elements of said plurality of microneedles allow liquid to flow therethrough between a plurality of second openings at a distal end of said hollow elements and said first openings at the second side of said base element; and a container structure comprising a reservoir capable of holding a liquid.

7. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 5, wherein at least one of said longitudinal axes of said microneedles is in alignment with one of a plurality of first openings in the second side of said base element; and wherein said hollow elements of said plurality of microneedles allow liquid to flow therethrough between a plurality of second openings at a distal end of said hollow elements and said first openings at the second side of said base element; and a container structure comprising a reservoir capable of holding a liquid.

8. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 1, wherein said plurality of projections comprises a plurality of solid elements, and wherein said substantially predetermined separation distance is within a range of 50-300 microns, and said substantially uniform length is within a range of 50-200 microns.

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9. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 8, wherein said plurality of solid elements each comprise a plurality of edged blades having a radius dimension, from a longitudinal axis of said solid elements, in the range of 10-50 microns.

10. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 9, wherein said plurality of solid elements each exhibit a substantially star-shaped outer contour in a transverse plane that is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of said solid element; and wherein said substantially predetermined separation distance is within a range of 100-200 microns, said substantially uniform length is within a range of 80-150 microns, and said plurality of solid elements each comprise a blade radius in the range of 10-15 microns.

11. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 10, wherein at least one of said longitudinal axes of said microneedles is located proximal to a plurality of openings in the second side of said base element; and wherein said plurality of microneedles allows liquid to flow along their outer surfaces through said openings at the second side of said base element; and a container structure comprising a reservoir capable of holding a liquid.

12. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 1, wherein each microneedle element is constructed of one of: a metal material manufactured by a micromachining process, a plastic material manufactured by a micromolding process, or a semiconductive material manufactured by a semiconductor fabrication process.

13. (Currently amended) An integral structure comprising a base element and plurality of microneedles formed thereon, said microneedles suitable for penetrating the stratum corneum layer of skin, wherein said base element has a first side and a second side;

said plurality of microneedles comprising a plurality of projections which extend from the second side of said base element along longitudinal axes, in a longitudinal direction exhibiting at least one angle with respect to said base element; and

said plurality of projections being spaced apart from one another at an average separation distance, and said plurality of projections having an average length, wherein:

said average separation distance is within a range of 50-1000 microns, and said average length is within a range of 50-3000 microns,

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wherein said microneedles have at least one elongate sharp edge that enhances penetration of said microneedles through the stratum corneum layer of skin, wherein said elongate sharp edge is oriented ~~substantially in parallel~~ to the longitudinal direction.

14. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 13, wherein said plurality of projections comprises a plurality of hollow elements, and wherein said average separation distance is within a range of 50-300 microns, and said average length is within a range of 50-200 microns.

15. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 14, wherein said plurality of hollow elements each comprise an outer diameter in the range of 20-100 microns.

16. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 15, wherein said plurality of hollow elements each exhibit a substantially circular outer contour in a transverse plane that is substantially perpendicular to a longitudinal axis of said hollow element; and wherein said average separation distance is within a range of 100-200 microns, said average length is within a range of 100-150 microns, and said plurality of hollow elements each comprise an outer diameter in the range of 20-50 microns.

17. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 15, wherein said plurality of hollow elements each exhibit an edged outer contour, in a transverse plane that is substantially perpendicular to a longitudinal axis of said hollow element, said outer contour having at least two sharp projections proximal to an end of the hollow element that is distal from said base element; and wherein said average separation distance is within a range of 100-200 microns, said average length is within a range of 80-150 microns, and said plurality of hollow elements each comprise an outer diameter in the range of 20-50 microns.

18. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 16, wherein at least one of said longitudinal axes of said microneedles is in alignment with one of a plurality of first openings in the second side of said base element; and wherein said hollow elements of said plurality of microneedles allow liquid to flow therethrough between a plurality of second openings at a distal end of said hollow elements and said first openings at the second side of said base element; and a container structure comprising a reservoir capable of holding a liquid.

19. (Original) The integral structure as recited in claim 17, wherein at least one of said longitudinal axes of said microneedles is in alignment with one of a plurality of first

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openings in the second side of said base element; and wherein said hollow elements of said plurality of microneedles allow liquid to flow therethrough between a plurality of second openings at a distal end of said hollow elements and said first openings at the second side of said base element; and a container structure comprising a reservoir capable of holding a liquid.

20. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 13, wherein said plurality of projections comprises a plurality of solid elements, and wherein said average separation distance is within a range of 50-300 microns, and said average length is within a range of 50-200 microns.

21. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 20, wherein said plurality of solid elements each comprise a plurality of edged blades having a radius dimension, from a longitudinal axis of said solid elements, in the range of 10-50 microns.

22. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 21, wherein said plurality of solid elements each exhibit a substantially star-shaped outer contour in a transverse plane that is substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of said solid element; and wherein said average separation distance is within a range of 100-200 microns, said average length is within a range of 80-150 microns, and said plurality of solid elements each comprise a blade radius in the range of 10-15 microns.

23. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 22, wherein at least one of said longitudinal axes of said microneedles is located proximal to a plurality of openings in the second side of said base element; and wherein said plurality of microneedles allows liquid to flow along their outer surfaces through said openings at the second side of said base element; and a container structure comprising a reservoir capable of holding a liquid.

24. (Withdrawn) The integral structure as recited in claim 13, wherein each microneedle element is constructed of one of: a metal material manufactured by a micromachining process, a plastic material manufactured by a micromolding process, or a semiconductive material manufactured by a semiconductor fabrication process.

25. (Previously presented) The integral structure as recited in claim 13, wherein said at least one sharp edge comprises two sharp edges, each said sharp edge being oriented substantially in the longitudinal direction.

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26. (Previously presented) The integral structure as recited in claim 25, wherein said two sharp edges are disposed 180° apart.

27. (Previously presented) The integral structure as recited in claim 13, wherein said projection extends from a proximal end juxtaposed with said base element to a distal end remote therefrom and said at least one sharp edge extends substantially from said proximal edge to said distal edge of said projection.

28. (Previously presented) The integral structure as recited in claim 27, wherein said projection tapers from said proximal end towards said distal end.

29. (New) The integral structure as recited in Claim 1, wherein said elongate sharp edge extends entirely from said proximal end of said microneedle to said distal end of said microneedle.